DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 093 026 CS 500 782

AUTHOR Pappas, Edward J.
TITLE Improving the Elementary and Secondary Speech Curriculum Through Curriculum Guidelines.
PUB DATE Nov 73
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (59th, New York City, November 8-11, 1973)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Course Evaluation; Course Objectives; Curriculum Development; *Curriculum Evaluation; *Curriculum Guides; Elementary Education; Motivation; Secondary Education; Speech; *Speech Curriculum; Teaching Techniques

ABSTRACT

Although basic guidelines for speech curricula have been articulated in a variety of elementary and secondary texts and conferences, reform of these curricula is overdue. Among many deficiencies, the following eight are evident but may be remedied: (1) the lack of articulation and coordination at the various levels; (2) the absence of meaningful and carefully reasoned rationales to accompany the course outlines; (3) a failure to establish goals for courses; (4) a tendency to ritualize what is done without an accompanying search for empirical support for the theory purported; (5) a fear of subjecting courses to rigorous evaluation; (6) a weak solution to the problem of motivation; (7) a fear of searching for criteria against which to measure successes and failures; and (8) the lack of concentrated study of strategies of instruction adapted to content. (JM)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED 093026

IMPROVING THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SPEECH CURRICULUM THROUGH CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

by

Edward J. Pappas

Wayne State University
Detroit, Michigan

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Edward J. Pappas
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER

SCA Convention
November 9, 1973
New York

CS 500 782

The high school speech curriculum has been the subject of numerous reviews, surveys, and studies. Every year at national, regional, state, and local conferences, the speech communication curriculum gets looked at with suggestions offered for its improvement. Just this past summer at the SCA-sponsored Summer Conference in Chicago the topic of "Communication in the Secondary School Language Arts Curricula" was specifically discussed. Several papers presented suggested improvements.

The word curriculum, as you know, refers to the entire body of courses offered in a specific discipline. Hence, what we are discussing this morning aims at improving this body of courses in speech communication through various means and resources. We are focusing on elementary and high school programs and in some schools the curriculum is one course. Specifically, I wish to focus on the improvement of our body of offerings through guidelines.

Methods texts, curriculum guides, and basic speech texts contain many curricular considerations. I will not review those this morning. Ratliffe in (1972) did a thorough job of reviewing comparative guidelines from these print sources. By examining her dissertation, one discovers where various scholars have placed emphasis in terms of what ought to be offered in programs and how it ought to be offered.

Ratliffe refined criteria developed by Oberle and Osborn and compared what high school speech textbooks, methods texts, and state curriculum guides say about each criterion. Her discussion is interesting in revealing what might be happening in the speech

classroom if we assume that those three sources, the basic speech text, the methods text, and the curriculum guide are indeed the print extensions of what Brown (1971) referred to as "the primary agents responsible for creating and developing curricula in speech programs." The three agents Brown identified are the student's teacher, the teacher's teacher, and the curriculum coordinator. It would be tedious, at least for this audience, for me to review the consensus and differences among these three print sources of guidelines and criteria. There are other sources of guidelines for curriculum improvements: Scholarly journals and convention programs, such as this one.

Reform of the speech curriculum is overdue and, hopefully, may be about to take place. My purpose is to discuss certain weaknesses and deficiencies of the present curriculum in speech communication at the elementary and secondary levels and to offer suggestions for their remedy.

Among many deficiencies and weaknesses that I might describe, time will permit me to discuss only the following eight:

(1) The lack of articulation and coordination of curricula at the various levels.

(2) The absence of meaningful and carefully reasoned rationales to accompany our courses.

(3) A failure to establish goals for courses.

(4) A tendency to ritualize what we do without an accompanying search for empirical support for the theory we purport to impart.

(5) A fear to subject our courses to rigorous evaluation.

(6) A weak solution to the problem of motivation.

(7) A fear of searching for criteria against which to measure our successes and failures; and

(8) The lack of concentrated study of strategies of instruction adapted to content.

Lack of Articulation and Coordination

One guideline for improvement rests with teachers at all levels. Curriculum improvement is hardly possible unilaterally. Elementary school persons must talk with high school teachers who must talk with community college instructors. They in turn must have contact with professors at the universities and then back the other way. One of the questions raised at the Summer Conference was "What is the relationship between the speech curricula of high schools and colleges?" Jim Gibson of the University of Missouri stated that it is a somewhat deficient relationship. This position, Gibson explained, in no way suggests that the instruction offered at any of the levels is deficient. Rather it seems that the communication that occurs between teachers and curriculum builders at the different levels is poor and, in some cases, non-existent. Gibson added to this concern for dialogue concern over the poor status of speech communication in many secondary and elementary schools.

Curriculum should be built in some sensibly cumulative way. Important improvements are difficult to achieve until teachers up and down the line know what their colleagues in other grades are doing, why they are doing it, and are enabled by their administration to meet and collaborate.

(2) Meaningful and Reasoned Rationales to Accompany Courses

Courses and instruction need to have solid rationales based on who the students are, what resources are available, and what community demands and constraints are present. Curricular improvement is possible when, rather than developing new courses, we explore critically the rationale for our existing offerings and eliminate what is weak or indefensible. Today's curriculum includes in many schools a rash of mini-courses that reflect, in many cases, the idiosyncracies of teachers rather than the calculated needs of students. This is particularly true in the English curriculum where some pride themselves on offering forty to fifty courses without a corresponding rationale for the courses except that of freedom of choice is what is needed.

(3) Need for Goals and Objectives to Accompany Courses

Here I do not wish to become involved in the issues of accountability and the means of phrasing our goals. These concerns are not new. Looking back fifty years, one can find journal articles on the need for goals and objectives. We should not become polarized into saying we are for or against but should concentrate on articulating as clearly as we can what we are trying to do, why we are trying to do it, and what good it is. In the past several years many articles on objectives have created camps. The guideline that I am proposing is the necessity for goals not the slavish insistence on how the goals need to be phrased. Those in that camp have been characterized by Charles Weingartner as "McNamara's band leading a parade of educational Edsels backward into the future." If we indicate what we are trying to do we can go on to

determine whether it is possible to do it--which brings me to my next concern.

(4) A Tendency to Ritualize What We Do

We tend to argue for inclusion of content but what we need to do is search for theoretical foundations for the inclusion of whatever we teach. For example, I submit the listening controversy. In a survey of high school teachers of speech in Minnesota, Steil discovered that while most teachers said they taught listening, few of them indicated how. The whole notion of teaching poise and self confidence needs constant review and evaluation. Public speaking vs. interpersonal. Activities vs. Fundamentals or Performance or content. What is needed to improve the curriculum is a scholarly search for empirical support for that which we wish to include. The whole topic of dialectology is another example of ritualizing without exhaustive scrutiny. The question should not be, "Do I correct?" or "Don't I correct?" but "Can I correct?" and how. To digress, in the area of teacher education program changes and innovations usually concentrate on presage and process factors rather than on product factors. In a dissertation just completed at Wayne State, Suczek discovered much ritualization in the teaching of organization existing in our literature. The guideline I propose is a research orientation to our courses for support that what we propose to teach can indeed be taught.

(5) Fear of Evaluation and Testing

We must be concerned with the evaluation of the outcomes of our curricula. We must be able to prove to principals, local and state school boards, and parents that what we say we do and what we say happens indeed does happen. Teachers must be willing to

attempt meaningful assessments of their programs or else the programs are faced with elimination and extinction. We all believe that what we are doing in the classroom is worthwhile. But school administrators and parents need not place any special credence in the testimony of teachers who claim that their programs are effective without any additional evidence. I am not talking about only cognitive types of evaluation. I maintain, however, that various means of measurement of educational outcomes need to be considered and attempted. The attitude that "what I teach cannot be measured" might lead to our total absence from the curriculum.

A newspaper article which appeared last July described a bill which was introduced in the Michigan Legislature last August. The bill would "ban any type of 'sensitivity training', guarantees parents or guardians the right to reviev all school programs to make sure they are aimed at 'developing the intellectual capacities of the child' prohibit the assigning of any child to any type of experimental program without written parental consent." and do some other things as well. The article quotes the legislator who is introducing the bill as saying: "What we want to do is get back to basics and forget about the rest of the junk they are getting in the schools."

Whether we could convince this legislator or not, whether such a bill will be passed or not, our concern should be to convince the public, the lawmakers, the adminstrator that what our curriculum attempts to do is not part of "that junk they are getting in schools."

(6) The Motivation Problem

Much research into the nature of motivation needs to be done. Curricular improvement is not possible without attention to the sources of motivation to our students. Strategies of learning must be developed and utilized with examination of research on motivation. In a study just completed at Wayne State, it was discovered that prime sources of motivation were the work itself, or the assignments and projects, achievement, growth, recognition and responsibility. Ideas for achieving curriculum improvement are frivolous without serious attention to motivating factors as they affect our classrooms. The review of literature demonstrates little in the way of motivational research similar to the wealth of projects and studies in business and industry. Content without accompanying motivationally-charged activities puts the curriculum into a mug-jug traditional mold.

(7) A Fear of Searching for Criteria Against Which to Measure Success and Failure

This weakness can be translated into a guideline by developing specific criteria. Criteria for any particular curriculum derive from value statements about what the curriculum or series of courses should be. The weakness I am citing comes from the reluctance of those who administer and teach in programs to ask, "How do I know I have a good program? Is mine a strong program or is it weak? Against what criteria am I making my judgments?" Jo Sprague (1973) in a paper published for the Summer Conference suggested three which I will not present because I cannot do them justice in the time I have. However, my point is that criteria were suggested.

Curriculum improvement will be difficult to promote without criteria. The Speech Teacher for September, 1968, included criteria to evaluate Speech I in the senior high school. Such criteria lists should be developed and included in any curriculum review.

(8) Curriculum Improvement Can Be Achieved Through Concentrated Study of Strategies of Learning Adapted to Content

As part of our examination of curriculum and instruction, we need to seek alternative strategies of instruction. To me a strategy is an attempt to adjust students to objective or objectives to students if I may paraphrase Donald Bryant. Too often teachers look at ways to use time rather than strategies to teach an idea. The proliferation of games and game books and exercises merely as time-fillers is a sad development. The Airlie Conference identified 19 long-range goals and priorities for education and we need to look at our priorities in terms of concepts, ideas and principles we wish to consider. At an action caucus on teaching strategies at The Memphis Conference, it was observed that developments in the theory, practice, and technology of instruction demand that teachers have an expanded repetoire of teaching strategies at their command. Substantial attention was given to the means through which teachers may be taught to broaden and perfect their use of instructional strategies. At the heart of the discussion was the realization that teachers must be able to choose from a wide range of strategies in order to meet the unique learning demands of individual students.

In informing teachers about learning strategies, careful attention should be given to the philosophical assumption and theory of

learning which underlies each strategy. Young teachers, caught up by the excitement of classroom games, simulation exercises, and multi-media presentations, may lose sight of the learning goals which such strategies are designed to accomplish.

In the foreward of the Teacher's Guide to High School Speech published by the Indiana State Department of Public Instruction, John Black states:

"Across the nation there is an awareness among secondary school educators that effective and responsible speech is central to man's relationships with his fellows and that, like other learned behaviors, speech requires disciplined study. Only through specific instruction in formal educational settings, it is generally understood, can the high school student achieve a satisfactory level of oral communication behavior. Haphazard learning cannot meet his needs. His teachers must be adequately and specifically trained in the field of speech. And his courses must be developed with integrity and substance." Such pronouncements are not rare. People in and out of our discipline extol what they think we try to do.

However, my thesis is that the basic needed guidelines have already been articulated in many places: in methods texts for elementary and secondary teachers; in curriculum guides, and in speech texts. They are in journals and at conferences, workshops and convention programs. They are mentioned in research associated with theses and dissertations.

Secondary and elementary speech communication curricula can be improved. To assess improvement requires measurement of past practice against new thrusts and approaches.

Curriculum improvement is possible, even probable, through efforts to eliminate deficiencies identified in this paper. Other means, of course, will be provided by my colleagues.